

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8120
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T W A L LAGOS 5201

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI
SUBJECT: FEDECO: GERRYMANDERING NIGERIAN-STYLE

1. IN AN APRIL 24 MEETING WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, ALHAJI AMADU KURFI, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (FEDECO), SAID THAT ETHNIC FACTORS WOULD BE "A MAJOR CONSIDERATION" AS FEDECO WENT ABOUT ITS TASK OF DRAWING CONSTITUTENCY BOUNDARIES FOR SEATS IN THE NATIONAL AND STATE ASSEMBLIES.

2. CONCERNING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONSTITUENCIES, KURFI SAID THAT FEDECO HAD SET A GENERAL QUOTA OF 125,000 PEOPLE PER DISTRICT, AF FIGURE DERIVED FROM THE 1963 CENSUS. HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE VARIATION IN REALITY IN THE SIZE OF DISTRICTS. KURFI CITED THE EXAMPLE OF AN UNIDENTIFIED LARGE KADUNA STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (LGA) WHICH HAD FEWER THAN 40,000 PEOPLE (1963 CENSUS FIGURES) WHICH FEDECO HAS DECIDED TO MAKE A DISTRICT FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE BASIS OF ETHNIC CONSIDERATIONS.

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3. SIMILARLY, IN NOTING THAT STATE ASSEMBLIES WOULD HAVE THREE TIMES THE NUMBER OF SEATS A STATE HAS IN THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, KURFI SAID THAT FEDECO WAS NOT AS A RULE SIMPLY DIVIDING EACH HOUSE DISTRICT INTO THREE PARTS FOR STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS. RATHER, ETHNIC AND "OTHER" CONSIDERATIONS WERE INVOLVED. AGAIN CITING THE SAME

KADUNA LGA, KURFI SAID IT WOULD HAVE ONLY ONE STATE ASSEMBLY SEAT (IN LINE WITH A 40,000 PERSON QUOTA FOR STATE SEATS) DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT ALSO HAD ONE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SEAT.

4. COMMENT: BY TAKING ETHNIC AS IALL AS NUMERICAL CONSIDERATIONSU INTO ACCOUNT IN DEFINIG LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS, FEDECO MAY BE OPENING A NIGERIAN PANDORA'S BOX. WE WOULD EXPECT CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY WHEN FEDECO'S DECISIONS BECOME KNOWN. KURFI MUST BE AWARE OF THAT POSSIBILITY BECAUSE HE REMARKED THAT FEDECO WANTS TO HAVE THE VOTERS' REGISTER AND THE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES FINISHED WELL IN ADVANCE OF 1979 SO THAT CIVILIAN POLITICIANS CANNOT TAMPER WITH THEM. END COMMENT.
WYMAN

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